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Contact: For questions about your state's delegates, alternates or selection process, please contact your state's selection administrator: Mrs. Carol Gneckow at (406) 444-2417, cgneckow@mt.gov. For more general information about the United States Senate Youth Program, please contact program director Rayne Guilford at 800-425-3632, www.ussenateyouth.org.

Montana Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program **-- Students Headed to Washington and to Receive \$5000 Scholarship--**

Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester today announced the names of the two Montana students who have been selected as delegates to the 47th Annual United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) that will be held March 7 – 14, 2009 in Washington, D.C. Samuel Hodges of Big Timber and Katherine Neher of Stevensville were chosen from hundreds of applicants to be part of the group of 104 student delegates who will attend the program's 47th Annual Washington Week.

The USSYP was created by Senate Resolution 324 in 1962 and has been sponsored by the Senate and fully funded by The Hearst Foundations since inception. Originally proposed by Senators Kuchel, Mansfield, Dirksen and Humphrey, the impetus for the program, as stated in Senate testimony at the time, was "to increase young Americans' understanding of the interrelationships of the three branches of government, the caliber and responsibilities of federally elected and appointed officials, and the vital importance of democratic decision making not only for America but for people around the world."

Each year this extremely competitive merit-based program brings 104 of the most outstanding high school students -- two from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity -- to Washington, D.C. for an intensive week-long study of the federal government and the people who lead it. The overall mission of the program is to help instill within each class of USSYP student delegates more profound knowledge of the American political process and a lifelong commitment to public service. In addition to the program week, the foundation grants each of the 104 student delegates a \$5,000 college scholarship with encouragement to continue coursework in government, history and public affairs. Transportation and all expenses for Washington Week are provided by the foundation, as stipulated in S.Res.324; no government funds are utilized.

Samuel Hodges is Senior Class President at Sweet Grass County High School. He is involved with Speech and Drama, Track and Field, Lettermans' Club, International Club, Boy Scouts, American Legion Boys State, Concert Band, National Honor Society and Honor Jazz Band. Samuel hopes to pursue a political science degree with a pre-law focus.

Katherine Neher attends Loyola Sacred Heart High School. She is a participant in Girls State, Speech and Debate, Missoula Youth Symphony, Missoula Children's Theater Performing Arts Camp, National Honor Society, Model United Nations, and the Missoula Youth Choir. Katherine plans to study vocal performance and political science, get a master's degree in public policy, and become either a teacher, a musician, or a politician.

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UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PAGE -2-

Chosen as alternates to the 2009 program were Clive Ogle, a resident of White Sulphur Springs, who attends White Sulphur Springs High School and Kevin Bingaman, a resident of Darby, who attends Darby High School.

The chief educational officer in each state selects the delegates after nomination by teachers and principals. This year's delegates were designated by Ms. Denise Juneau, Superintendent of Public Instruction.

While in Washington the student delegates will attend meetings and briefings with Senate leadership, other Senators and Congressional staff; the President, a Justice of the Supreme Court, leaders of cabinet agencies, an Ambassador to the United States and top members of the national media. The students will also tour many of the national monuments and several museums and they will stay at the historic Mayflower hotel in downtown Washington, D.C.

In addition to outstanding leadership abilities and a strong commitment to public service, this year's students rank academically in the top one percent of their states. They continue to excel and develop impressive qualities that are often directed toward public service. Among the many distinguished former program delegates are Senator Susan Collins of Maine, the first program delegate elected to the Senate; Chief Judge Robert Henry, U.S. Court of Appeals; former Ambassador to West Germany Richard Burt; former Presidential Advisors Thomas "Mack" McLarty and Karl Rove. Additional distinguished alumni are former Lt. Governor of Idaho David LeRoy, U.S. Attorney for New Jersey Christopher Christie, military officers, Foreign Service Officers, members of State Legislatures, top Congressional staff, healthcare providers and university educators.

Members of the USSYP 2009 47th Annual Senate Advisory Committee are: Co-Chairs — Senator Thomas R. Carper of Delaware and Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. Advisory Committee — Senator Christopher J. Dodd of Connecticut, Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, Senator Claire McCaskill of Missouri, Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon, Senator John Barrasso of Wyoming, Senator John B. Ensign of Nevada, Senator Richard G. Lugar of Indiana and Senator Mel Martinez of Florida. Each year, the Honorary Co-Chairs of the program are the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders and the Vice President of the United States.
